

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 /011 W
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R 141405Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9471

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PORT OF SPAIN 1818

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PDIP, TD, US, SCUL

SUBJECT: LOCAL REACTION TO AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL

REF: STATE 169682

1. AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL WAS NOTED WITH PUBLIC EVENTS AND MEDIA COVERAGE FAR EXCEEDING USUAL FOURTH OF JULY ANNIVERSARY AND IS CONTINUING TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON AMERICAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND HISTORY IN HIGHLY POSITIVE MANNER.

2. PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS BROKE HIS FIRM RULE OF NOT ATTENDING NATIONAL DAY RECEPTIONS AND TOGETHER WITH THE GOVERNOR GENERAL AND MANY OTHER WELL-WISHERS CAME TO THE OFFICIAL RECEPTION I HOSTED AT THE RESIDENCE IN HONOR OF OUR 200TH.

2. SEPARATELY, THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO -- UNITED STATES BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE, FORMED OF BOTH TRINIDAD CITIZENS AND AMERICAN RESIDENTS TO PROMOTE SPECIAL EVENTS THROUGHOUT THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR, HELD AN ALL-DAY FESTIVE PARTY AT THE HILTON HOTEL WHICH MORE THAN A THOUSAND PEOPLE ATTENDED DESPITE DRENCHING RAINS. MANY MORE DROVE INTO THE CITY FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY TO WITNESS BICENTENNIAL FIREWORKS WHICH THE COMMITTEE SPONSORED ON PORT OF SPAIN'S CENTRAL SAVANNAH IN THE
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EVENING. A FEW DAYS EARLIER THE DEAN OF BOWIE STATE

UNIVERSITY IN MARYLAND HAD BEEN SPONSORED FOR TWO APPEARANCES IN READINGS OF BLACK AMERICAN POETRY.

4. MEDIA TREATMENT OF THE BICENTENNIAL WAS QUITE HEAVY. THE MAJOR DAILY PAPER RAN A SPECIAL EIGHT-PAGE SUPPLEMENT ON JULY 4 WITH PHOTOGRAPHS, MESSAGES FROM ME AND OTHERS, AND SPECIAL ARTICLES ON AMERICANA. THE SUPPLEMENT WAS SUPPORTED BY LOCAL ADVERTISERS. A RECORDED RADIO ADDRESS WHICH I MADE WAS BROADCAST SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE DAY, AND SEVERAL RADIO STATIONS CARRIED SPECIAL PROGRAMS OF AMERICAN MUSIC THROUGHOUT THE WEEKEND.

5. TELEVISION COVERAGE WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY A THIRTY-MINUTE INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER IN RELATION TO THE AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL. IN ADDITION, THE SPECIAL TRINIDAD-GOVERNMENT SPONSORED WEEKLY TV INTERVIEW SHOW DEVOTED THREE SUCCESSIVE WEEKS BEFORE AND AFTER JULY 4 TO HALF-HOUR INTERVIEWS WITH AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICERS, BEGINNING WITH THE PAO SPEAKING ABOUT AMERICAN HISTORY AND HERITAGE, MOVING ON TO THE DCM DISCUSSING FOREIGN POLICY SINCE WORLD WAR II, AND ENDING THIS WEEK WITH ONE OF OUR VICE CONSULS DISCUSSING VISAS AND IMMIGRATION. LOCAL PRESS AND TV ALSO GAVE SIZEABLE SPACE DURING WEEK FOLLOWING JULY 4 TO REPORTS OF BICENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED STATES.

6. IN TWO ADDITIONAL WAYS TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO PARTICIPATED OFFICIALLY. WINNING GROUP UNDER ANNUAL VILLAGE CULTURAL COMPETITION SPONSORED BY PRIME MINISTER WAS SENT TO WASHINGTON UNDER JOINT USATRINIDADIAN OFFICIAL SPONSORSHIP FOR PARTICIPATION IN SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE FESTIVAL ON THE MALL. DISPATCH OF COAST GUARD DELEGATION LED BY COMMANDING OFFICER TO ATTEND INTERNATIONAL NAVAL GGCWIEW AND OPERATION SAIL EVENTS IN NEW YORK ALSO CREATED PUBLICITY AND RECOGNITION.

7. WHILE TRINIDAD'S OFFICIAL BOW TO AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL LACKED SOME OF THE STATESMANLIKE GESTURES OF MORE ESTABLISHED STATES, IT WAS NEVERTHELESS AT A LEVEL QUITE NOTEWORTHY HERE AND EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT IN VIEW OF LOCQH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PREOCCUPATION ALMOST TOTALLY WITH IMMINENT NATIONAL ELECTIONS. FURTHER SPECIAL EVENTS BY LOCAL BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR WILL CONTINUE TO HIGHLIGHT AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENTS AND CULTURE. I BELIEVE THE OCCASION OF OUR 200TH ANNIVERSARY AS A NATION HAS ENCOURAGED MANY TRINIDADIANS TO LOOK AGAIN AT THE POSITIVE HERITAGE AMERICA SYMBOLIZES. WE HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE IN THE NUMBER OF PROMINENT CITIZENS WHO HAVE INVOLVED THEM-

SELVES IN THE OCA

ZICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE. FOR A
SMALL AND STILL SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVE AND SUSPICIOUS
LESS-DEVELOPED COUNTRY, I CONSIDER THE RESPONSE HERE
TO HAVE BEEN GRATIFYING.
FAY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PORTO01818
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760271-0025
From: PORT OF SPAIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760759/aaaabzzl.tel
Line Count: 122
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 169682
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <08 JUL 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LOCAL REACTION TO AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL
TAGS: PFOR, PDIP, SCUL, TD, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006